

CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK/SITE NAME: Katharine B. and Harry L. Mott House
OWNER: Deborah M. and Monte Stavis
APPLICANT: Same as Owner
LOCATION: 3325 Inwood Drive, Houston, Texas
30-DAY HEARING NOTICE: N/A

AGENDA ITEM: IV.c
HPO FILE NO.: 06L167
DATE ACCEPTED: Oct-26-06
HAHC HEARING DATE: Nov-16-06
PC HEARING DATE: Nov-30-06

SITE INFORMATION

Lot 7, Block 4, River Oaks Country Club Estates, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas. The site includes a historic two-story English style residence.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Landmark Designation

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Katharine B. and Harry L. Mott House was constructed in 1930 and designed by Mrs. Mott for her family. The body of work created by Katharine Mott includes over 20 homes built in River Oaks, Riverside Terrace, Edgemont and Devonshire Place. Mrs. Mott received notice early on from Hugh Potter, the President of River Oaks Corporation. The Houston Business Journal quotes Mr. Potter as saying to Will C. Hogg, "the houses built by Mrs. Mott and her husband in Riverside Terrace and Edgemont have done more to attract prospects than any other one thing. They are, by all odds, the most attractive structures in those additions." Mrs. Mott's contributions to Houston were recognized in 1998 with a Rice Design Alliance Tour, and the home was referenced in Stephen Fox's Houston Architectural Guide. The Katharine B. and Harry L. Mott House, at 3325 Inwood Drive, qualifies for Landmark designation under criteria 4, 5, and 6.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Notable Houston builder, Katharine Mott, designed the home at 3325 Inwood for her own family in 1930. The Houston Architectural Survey contains a comprehensive biography of Mrs. Mott as follows:

"Katharine B. Mott and her husband, Harry L. Mott moved to Houston from Indianapolis in 1930. After visits to the west coast and Texas in search of a warmer climate in which to live, the Motts settled on Houston as the friendliest place with the greatest business potential. In Indianapolis, Mrs. Mott had begun designing houses after the last of her three daughters started school. The first three houses she designed were all for her own family, but each was subsequently sold to an admirer. Mr. Mott, a real estate developer, realized his wife's talent and commissioned her to design houses for an entire block in one of his Indianapolis developments. In 12 months, Mrs. Mott saw twelve of her designs constructed. She completed 18 more before leaving Indianapolis."

"Because Mrs. Mott had no formal training in architecture, she worked with Edward James of the Indianapolis architectural firm, Burns and James. The partners, Lee Burns (1872-1957) and Edward D. James (1897-c. 1965) worked together from 1926 to 1949. Edward James, F.A.I.A. was an Indianapolis native who received his architecture training at Cornell University after attending classes at Butler University in his home state. James worked with firms in New York, Philadelphia and Orlando from 1923 until 1926, when he returned to Indianapolis as a partner of Lee James, who had been in practice then with William Osler for several years. In 1949, the partnership was dissolved, when Burns took his son as partner and formed Burns & Burns. Edward

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James organized his own firm in 1949 in which he practiced until his death in the 1960s. His most notable works were modern institutional projects including several buildings for Indiana University (1947-1953) and the Indianapolis Airport (1955)."

"Burns & James' published houses were generally in the Colonial style rather than in the Old English styles preferred by the Motts. This stylistic difference reinforces reports that Mrs. Mott herself was primarily responsible for the designs. Between 1928 and 1932, Katharine and Harry Mott built over 20 houses in the Houston subdivisions of Riverside Terrace, Edgemont, Devonshire Place and River Oaks. These houses were formularized to a certain extent, although each was unique in elevation and plan. They feature tapestry brick with casement windows; their plans are asymmetrical with the main entrance off center, and their scale is large. Some are Tudor in character, some contain half timbering in the Elizabethan tradition, while others have more Norman elements such as a round tower with a conical roof. Mrs. Mott brought with her from Indianapolis her carpenter and brick mason, both of whom were very skilled craftsmen. The unusual brickwork, although it is never the same, is a recognizable feature of the Mott houses."

"Katharine Mott developed cancer which brought her involvement in speculative real estate to an abrupt halt. The economic depression of the 1930s slowed all building in Houston, and Mr. Mott, in 1932, became a sales representative of the River Oaks Corporation, which did manage to continue its aggressive sales campaign throughout the 1930s. He remained in this capacity until 1950 when he opened his own real estate office where he worked until his death in 1958. "

"The Motts did build their own home at 11527 Memorial Drive in Piney Point Village in the 1950s and Katharine Mott continued to live there until her death in 1979."

It should be noted that Mrs. Mott, a builder, received notice early on from Hugh Potter, one of the developers of River Oaks. The Houston Business Journal quotes Mr. Potter as saying to Will C. Hogg, "the houses built by Mrs. Mott and her husband in Riverside Terrace and Edgemont have done more to attract prospects than any other one thing. They are, by all odds, the most attractive structures in those additions." Her contribution to architecture in Houston was recognized in later years by a 1998 Rice Design Alliance Architectural Tour and Lecture "Modern Homecraft: the Houses of Katharine B. Mott and Harry L. Mott."

According to various sources including the Rice Design Alliance, the Houston Survey and Stephen Fox's Houston Architectural Guide, Katharine Mott was responsible for the following homes in Houston:

1635 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1928; 1659 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1928; 1660 South Boulevard, with Burns and James, 1929; 2421 Brentwood Drive, with Burns and James, 1929; 2555 North MacGregor Way, with Burns and James, 1929; 2413 Brentwood Drive (demolished); 3263 Del Monte Drive, with Burns and James, 1930 (demolished); 1920 Woodbury, with Burns and James, 1930; 3325 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1930; 3027 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1930; 2947 Inwood, with Burns and James, 1931; 3196 Del Monte Drive, with Birdsall Briscoe, 1931; 1419 Kirby Drive, with Burns and James, 1931

The home at 3325 Inwood is described by Stephen Fox in the Houston Architectural Guide as "whitewashed brick and timbered house." The house faces north and is set back approximately 80 feet from Inwood Drive. It is a Period house designed in the English style with a central tower. It is of interest to note that the front door is set at the base of the tower at a 45 degree angle to the street. The home is approximately 100' wide and has an average depth of 20' in most places, being only one room deep in keeping with Katharine Mott's ideas about ventilation.

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Its most striking feature when viewed from the street is the red brick tower that serves as the entry. The front door is of an English block panel design with a small stained glass window where a peep door may have been traditionally located. The door has an elliptical arched head. Above the front portal is a tall leaded glass window, also with an elliptical head. In front of this window is a wooden balcony with turned newels for balusters and stop chamfered square posts at the corners. These posts are attached with mortise and tenon connections and supported by wood brackets. The front door, along with the window and balcony above, are all set within a quoined stone surround that serves to frame these elements together into one powerful vertical feature on the face of the tower. The home relies heavily on half-timber and stucco, or more properly known as fachwerk, design motifs. Like many other Tudor inspired examples across the country, it is for appearance only, being applied over the frame of the home as a veneer. Fachwerk detailing may also be seen on the second story, cantilevered over the floor below that has white washed brick which is laid on the diagonal between the half timbers, and which alternates in direction from panel to panel in a herringbone pattern. This part of the home also has a white washed brick veneer of standard running bond.

Varied and interesting leaded glass patterns are used throughout the front elevation. The windows in the living room feature small shields or crests in the center of the transom glass. All windows were steel casement design with authentic divided lite and putty set glazing. Windows surrounded by brick instead of fachwerk are capped with a wooden header beam, which is supported by the brick on each side. The base of the cantilevered portions of the second story are finished with a half-timber that is flared out at the bottom to create a larger soffit and then a crown mould is used as a brick frieze for the veneer below. This detail is very subtle but greatly enhances the look.

Of interest, the home was built with masonry frame construction. In modern framing, wood studs are used to support the joists or trusses that comprise the second floor, then studs are used again to support the roof. On this house brick was used to support the wood floor joists and the wood rafters. The faux half-timber work and stucco were then applied over the brick on the outside by using strategically placed deadmen (wood bricks) as anchor points. On the inside the brick was covered in authentic plaster. Interior partition walls were 1 5/8" x 3 5/8" studs with wire lath and plaster applied to each side. Some of the more recently remodeled portions of the home used sheetrock (gypsum board) as is typical with new construction.

The existing foundation has concrete footings and stem walls supporting wood floor joists. It has a central basement with a crawl space to each side. The exterior brickwork is punctuated by vents for the crawl spaces. The floor over the basement is at a higher elevation than that which lies over the crawl spaces to each side. This element creates the need for a step down from the entry and dining room to the living room on one side and down to the kitchen on the other side.

The interior detail is elegant in its simplicity. Plaster walls with 90-degree corners are rabbited into stained wood frames and door jambs. Doors are stained Elm with a Chinese Chippendale inspired, intricate, raised panel design. This style is in keeping with a period English home and their fascination with things from East Asia. The stairs wind their way up the wall of the circular entry in the tower and have an open tread with stained tread blocks (again very English) plus a wonderful wrought iron balustrade. There is a distinct lack of crown moulding in the home, with the exception of the formal rooms located on the first floor. The base board is a plain stained 1 x 6 with no cap that turns 90 degrees at corners and terminates into the aforementioned rabbited jambs. Most openings in walls are uncased plaster and have square tops, except for some that have an ogee detail in the corners.

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According to Larry Burns, a Houston architect and the chair of the Katharine Mott Tour for the Rice Design Alliance, Ellie Mott Howell (her daughter) indicated that the family lived in the home only "until 1932 when the depression caused them to lose almost everything and move way out to Mott Lane (Memorial)."

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

The Katherine Mott House at 3325 Inwood is in the process of an extensive restoration and sensitive expansion. The current owners, Monte and Deborah Stavis, have gone to extensive efforts to maintain the original character of the home. Interior remodeling has been kept to a minimum and can be more described as restoration. Most of the remodel consists of an addition to the rear of the home, located between the main house and the carriage house. This addition did not alter the front elevation as is invisible from the street. There is also a covered porch that runs the length of the Family Room between the existing house and the new Loggia

The design of the addition, both inside and out, matches the existing house and any future visitor will most likely not be able to tell where the new construction starts. The one area that is stylistically different from the remainder of the house is the loggia. A new material (field stone) was added to the project to set this part of the home apart and give it a more rustic and earthy feel that compliments the home beautifully.

It should also be noted that most of the existing windows that were removed from the existing home to facilitate the joining of the addition were reused and incorporated into the new design. This relocation of existing material was also done with any decorative wood brackets that were removed.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Fox, Stephen, Houston Architectural Guide, American Institute of Architects, 1999

Houston Architectural Survey, Volume 3, Southwest Center for Urban Research and the School of Architecture, Rice University, 1980

Interview of Larry Burns by Kelley Trammell, October 23, 2006

Rice Design Alliance, "Modern Homecraft: The Houses of Katharine B. Mott and Harry L. Mott", April 1998

Sabota, Danni, Houston Business Journal, "Houses by Katharine Mott," February 24, 1992.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Thomas McWhorter, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION:

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation of a Landmark.

(a) The HAHC and the commission, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

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S	NA		S - satisfies	D - does not satisfy	NA - not applicable
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	(6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;			
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.			

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

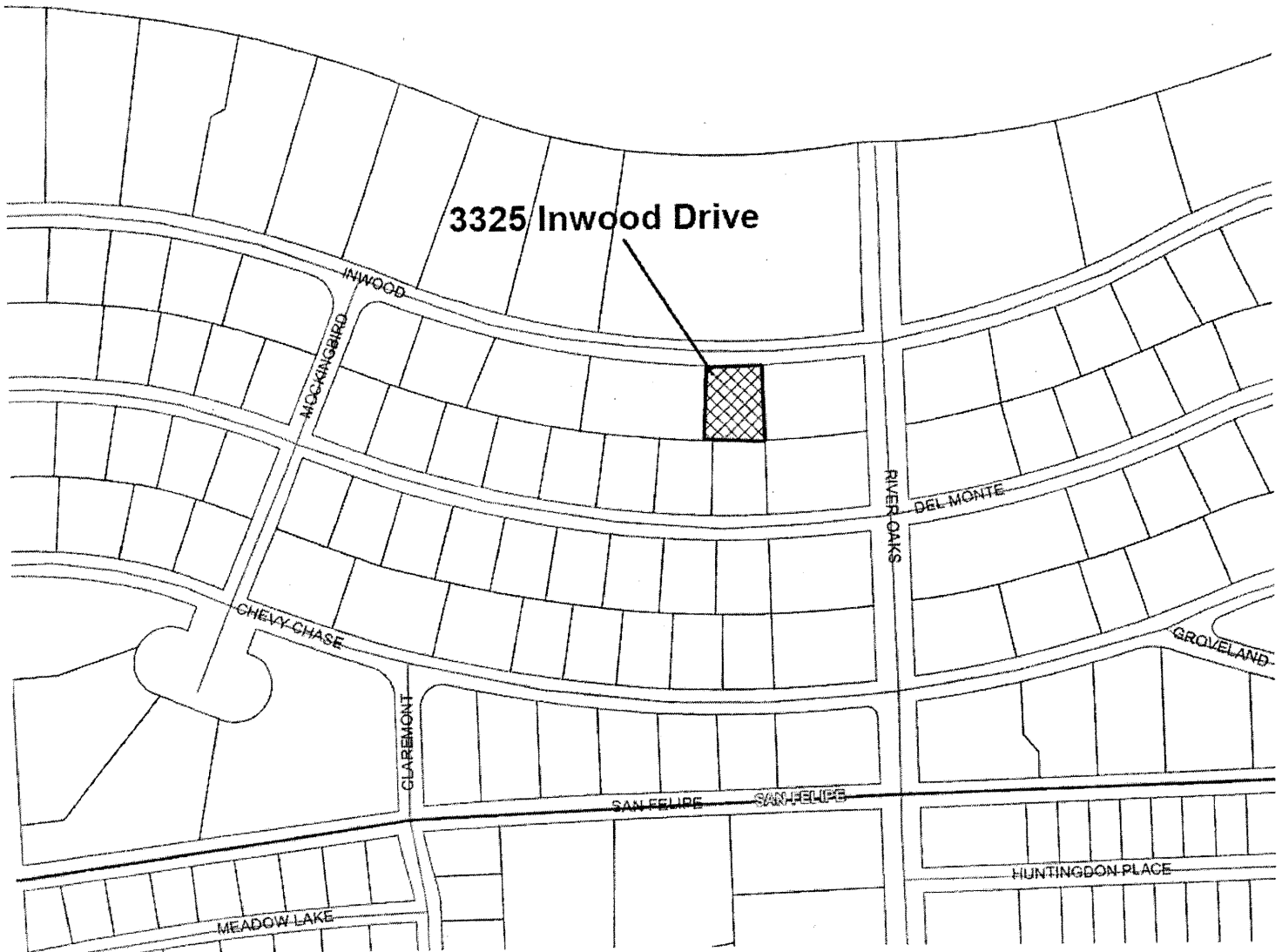
Staff recommends that the Houston Planning Commission recommends to Houston City Council the Landmark Designation of the Katherine B. and Harry L. Mott House located at 3325 Inwood Drive.

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SITE LOCATION MAP
THE KATHERINE B. AND HARRY L. MOTT HOUSE
3325 INWOOD DRIVE
NOT TO SCALE





3325 NWOOD
3742

